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ABSTRACT

This report describes a survey undertaken for the Task Force on English to determine the number of children in Vancouver schools for whom English is a second language. It reports the extent to which these children are handicapped in their use of the English language and identifies their placement needs within the school system. Questionnaires were distributed to all school principals and the information provided by them is summarized in the report. There are nearly 19,000 pupils in Vancouver for whom English is a second language; nearly 34% of the elementary enrollment and approximately 21% of the secondary enrollment. Chinese is the "first language" for nearly half of these pupils and Italian, German, Punjabi and Portuguese are the "first languages" for another 30%. While a majority of these pupils have functional literacy, many are handicapped in school by their limited facility with English and approximately 10% are unable to read or write English. While the needs of the large majority of these pupils can be met in regular classrooms (particularly if class size and program are modified), approximately 15% require placement in a special English language class and another 4% require help in addition to such special placement. The report clearly establishes the need in Vancouver schools for a comprehensive program of English language instruction for the large number of pupils for whom English is a second language. (Author)

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RESEARCH REPORT

SURVEY OF PUPILS IN VANCOUVER SCHOOLS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE

January 21, 1975

E.N. Ellis

Research Report 75-23

FL 008 246

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ABSTRACT

This report describes a survey undertaken for the Task Force on English to determine the number of children in Vancouver schools for whom English is a second language. It reports the extent to which these children are handicapped in their use of the English language and identifies their placement needs within the school system. Questionnaires were distributed to all school principals and the information provided by them is summarized in the report.

There are nearly 19,000 pupils in Vancouver for whom English is a second language; nearly 34% of the elementary enrolment and approximately 21% of the secondary enrolment. Chinese is the "first language" for nearly half of these pupils and Italian, German, Punjabi and Portuguese are the "first languages" for another 30%.

While a majority of these pupils have functional literacy, many are handicapped in school by their limited facility with English and approximately 10% are unable to read or write English.

While the needs of the large majority of these pupils can be met in regular classrooms (particularly if class size and program are modified), approximately 15% require placement in a special English language class and another 4% require help in addition to such special placement.

The report clearly establishes the need in Vancouver schools for a comprehensive program of English language instruction for the large number of pupils for whom English is a second language.

SURVEY OF PUPILS IN VANCOUVER SCHOOLS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Introduction

Concern over the reading and writing programs in Vancouver schools culminated in the establishment in June, 1974 of a Task Force on English with the following terms of reference:

> "To determine whether the reading and writing program (K-12) meets the needs of the students in the context of today's society, and more specifically to determine whether the current reading and writing program is adequate to prepare the student to achieve his social and economic goals, and to make recommendations thereon."

Early in their deliberations, members of the Task Force directed their attention to the special needs of those pupils for whom English is a second language. In addition to the steadily increasing number of immigrant children, there are many other Canadian children from non-English speaking homes whose limited facility in English is handicapping their progress in school work. The Task Force had a need for reliable data on the extent of the problem.

Purpose of the Survey

The survey was undertaken by the Task Force

- to determine the number of children for whom English is a second language
- to learn of the extent to which these children are handicapped in the listening, speaking, reading and writing of English, and
- to identify their placement needs.

Procedures

A questionnaire (see Appendix A), directed to all school principals on November 15, 1974, called for the names of all pupils for whom English is a second language and the listing of their first languages. Teachers rated their abilities to use English in listening, speaking, reading and writing and estimated how much help each pupil needed.

In an attempt to obtain more specific information about the placement needs of these children in elementary schools, a second questionnaire (see Appendix B) was completed by principals of ten elementary schools.

Findings

a) Returns from Elementary Schools

Returns were received from all of the 75 elementary schools and these are summarized in Table 1.

In these 75 schools which have a total enrolment of 38,400, there are 13,005 pupils for whom English is a second language. This is 33.9% of the enrolment.

Chinese is the "first language" for 39.3% of the children. Other first languages in rank order are Italian (14.6%), German (6.1%), Portuguese (5.7%), Punjabi (5.6%), and Greek (4.9%).

The distribution of ratings for each of the language abilities covers the entire range and it is clearly skewed with a greater frequency of high ratings than lower ones. Listening and speaking abilities were rated above reading and writing, and in that order. The typical student was rated "2" on each ability-scale, i.e. he is able to cope with the literacy demands of most day-to-day situations. However, he will require time and may make a few errors. Approximately one-seventh of the group cannot read or write.

In terms of the initial survey, teachers suggest that for 80% of them, their needs can be met in a regular classroom, 14% require placement in a special English class for New Canadians, and another 4.2% require special help in addition to placement in an English class for New Canadians.

The results of the follow-up survey in ten schools to obtain more precise information (see Table 4) have been used to revise the earlier statement of placement needs in elementary schools. In terms of this scale:

49.6% have needs that can be met in the regular classroom,
and (in addition) another
34.2% providing the regular class size and program are modified.
11.4% require placement in a special English class for New
Canadians, and
3.7% require special help in addition to such special placement.
For 1.1% there was no statement of placement needs.

b) Returns from Secondary Schools

Returns were received from seventeen of the eighteen secondary schools and these are summarized in Table 2.

In these seventeen schools (total enrolment 28,267) there are 5850 students for whom English is a second language. This is 20.7% of the enrolment.

For more than half of these students, their "first language" is Chinese. For one-tenth of the group, the "second language" is German, while for another tenth, it is Italian.

The distribution of ratings for each of the language abilities covers the entire range and it is even more negatively skewed than the distribution for elementary pupils. Generally, "listening" is rated highest, "speaking" second best, "reading" third, and "writing" is

lowest of the four. The typical student is rated in the highest category and functions quite satisfactorily in 'listening', 'speaking' and'reading' but is rated in the second category for 'writing'.

Teachers of these students suggest that for 78% of them, their needs can be met in the regular classroom, 17% require placement in a special English class for New Canadians and another 3% require special help in addition to placement in an English class for New Canadians.

c) Returns from Elementary and Secondary Schools (Combined)

When the returns from elementary and secondary schools are combined, (see Table 3) there is a total of 18,855 pupils for whom English is a second language. This represents 28.3% of the enrolment.

Chinese is the "first language" for nearly one-half of these students. Other "first languages" in rank order are Italian (13.2%), German (7.4%), Punjabi (4.9%) and Portuguese (4.8%). These were the most frequent at both elementary and secondary levels. The higher ranking of Italian over German in the elementary listing of "first languges" reflects the shift in immigration over the last twenty years.

There is a great range in the language abilities of the group. The majority can meet tolerably well the English language requirements of most day-to-day situations but approximately ten per cent are unable to read or write English. Listening and speaking abilities are higher than those of reading and writing; and in that order.

About 80% of these students have needs that can be met in regular classrooms, particularly if class size and program are modified. Approximately 15% require placement in an English class for New Canadians and another 4% require help in addition to such special placement.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF RETURNS FROM 75 ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

TOTAL ENROLMENT - 38,400

1. No. of pupils for whom English is a second language - 13,005 (33.9%)

2. "First" Languages

LANGUAGE	NO.	%	LANGUAGE	NO.	%
Chinese	5109	39.3	Japanese	320	2.5
Italian	1905	14.6	Yugoslavic	291	2.2
German	794	6.1	Filipino/Tagalog	226	1.7
Portuguese	738	5.7	French	208	1.6
Punjabi	731	5.6	Spanish	152	1.2
Greek	631	4.9	Fijian	149	1.1
Hindi & Other East Indian Languages	613	4.7	All Others (each less than 1%)	1138	8.8

3. Distributions of Ratings - Language Abilities (columns 3, 4, 5, 6)

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Number of "5"'s	3.3%	3.2%	14.3%	13.7%
4 's	9.8%	9.9%	13.9%	11.8%
3 's	16.2%	15.8%	17.5%	18.8%
2 's	23.8%	28.5%	19.0%	25.4%
1 's	47.0%	42.5%	35.3%	30.2%
Total	100.1%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%

4. Distribution of Placement Needs (column 7)	No.	%
Number of A's (His need can be met within the regular classroom)	10,466	80.5
Number of B's (Placement in a special English class for New Canadians)	1,847	14.2
Number of C's (Help in addition to placement in an English class)	551	4.2
No Response	141	1.1
TOTAL	13,005	100.0

TABLE 2: SUMMARY OF RETURNS FROM 17 SECONDARY SCHOOLS

TOTAL ENROLMENT - 28,267

1. No. of pupils for whom English is a second language - 5850 (20.7%)

2. "First" Languages

LANGUAGE	NO.	%	LANGUAGE	NO.	%
Chinese	2933	50.1	French	92	1.6
German	598	10.2	Greek	86	1.5
Italian	590	10.1	Hungarian	85	1.5
Punjabi	193	3.3	Yugoslavic	78	1.3
Portuguese	176	3.0	Filipino/Tagalog	77	1.3
Hindi & Other East Indian Languages	175	3.0	No Response	181	3.1
Japanese	100	1.7	All Others (each less than 1%)	486	8.3

3. Distributions of Ratings - Language Abilities (columns 3, 4, 5, 6)

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Number of "5"'s	1.0%	0.8%	1.1%	1.2%
4 's	3.4%	3.8%	3.8%	3.2%
3 's	11.3%	13.6%	15.9%	17.4%
2 's	19.1%	22.8%	24.9%	32.3%
1 's	64.1%	57.7%	53.0%	43.6%
No Response	1,2%	1.3%	1.3%	2.2%
Total	100.1%	100.0%	100.0%	99.9%

4. Distribution of Placement Needs (column 7)	No.	%
Number of A's (His need can be met within the regular classroom)	4560	77.9
Number of B's (Placement in a special English class for New Canadians)	998	17.1
Number of C's (Help in addition to placement in an English class)	187	3.2
No Response	105	1.8
TOTAL	5850	100.0

TABLE 3: SUMMARY OF RETURNS FROM 75 ELEMENTARY AND 17 SECONDARY SCHOOLS (COMBINED)

TOTAL ENROLMENT - 66,667

1. No. of pupils for whom English is a second language - 18,855 (28.3%)

2. "First" Languages

LANGUAGE	NO.	%	LANGUAGE	NO.	%
Chinese	8042	42.7	Japanese	420	2.2
Italian	2495	13.2	Yugoslavic	369	2.0
German	1392	7.4	Filipino/Tagalog	303	1.6
Punjabi	924	4.9	French	300	1.6
Portuguese	914	4.8	No kesponse	181	1.0
Hindi & Other East Indian Languages	788	4.2	All Others (each less than 1%)	2010	10.7
Greek	717	3.8			

3. Distributions of Ratings - Language Abilities (columns 3, 4, 5, 6)

	Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
Number of "5"'s	2.5%	2.5%	10.2%	9.8%
4 's	7.8%	8.0%	10.8%	9.1%
3 's	14.7%	15.1%	17.0%	18.4%
2 's	22.3%	26.7%	20.8%	27.6%
1 's	52.3%	47.2%	40.8%	34.3%
No Response	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.7%
Total	100.0%	99.9%	100.0%	99.9%

4. Distribution of Placement Needs (column 7)

	No.	%
Number of A's (His need can be met within the regular classroom)	15,026	79.7
Number of B's (Placement in a special English class for New Canadians	2,845	15.1
Number of C's (Help in addition to placement in an English class)	738	3.9
No response	246	1.3
TOTAL	18,855	100.0

TABLE 4

SUMMARY OF SURVEY OF PLACEMENT NEEDS OF PUPILS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE

(Sample of ten elementary schools. Total enrolment 4757)

ORIGINAL SURVEY (November 15, 1974)	No.	%
A - His needs can be met within the regular classroom	1489	76.8
B - This student requires placement in a special English class for new Canadians	335	17.3
C - This student requires special help in addition to placement in an English class for new Canadians	115	5.9
Total	1939	100.0

FOLLOW-UP SURVEY (December 6, 1974)	No.	%
1 - (Same as the former A category) His needs can be met within the regular classroom	928	47.9
2 - His needs can be met in a regular classroom with modified class size and a modified program	640	33.0
3 - (Same as the former B category) This student requires placement in a special English class for new Canadians	270	13.9
4 - (Same as the former C category) This student requires special help in addition to placement in an English class for new Canadians	101	5.2
Total	1939	100.0

APPENDIX A (1)

November 15, 1974

TO: ALL SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

The Task Force in English is presently studying the needs of students in regard to reading and writing instruction, with particular attention to those children for whom English is a second language.

A survey is being undertaken to determine how many children need instruction in English as a second language and how severe is the language handicap of each child. Please choose the best means of obtaining the information that is required. It might be through the homeroom teacher or from the teacher of English. In either case, this teacher should respond on the form provided.

In the first column, the teacher should list the names of those pupils for whom English is a second language, i.e. pupils who may have already learned another language before learning English or who learnt another language simultaneously with English. In the second column, the teacher should identify the child's first language.

The teacher should rate in columns 3, 4, 5, and 6, the language abilities of the pupil in listening, speaking, reading and writing using the five point scale that accompanies the record sheet.

In the 7th column, teachers are asked to indicate how much help the student needs in terms of (A, B, or C).

(A) His need can be met within the regular classroom
(B) This student requires placement in a special English class for new Canadians
(C) This student requires special help in addition to placement in an English class for new Canadians

When the returns from your teachers are complete, please summarize them on the form provided. (Returns from annexes should be included with those from the main school.) The summary form, together with the teachers' returns, should reach this office by December 2, 1974.

A summary for the entire school district will be compiled and a copy will be sent to your school. Your assistance and the cooperation of your staff is genuinely appreciated.

E.N. Ellis,
Head of Research and Evaluation

ENE/dc
(Copies for Teachers)

APPENDIX A (2)

SCALES FOR THE RATING OF LANGUAGE ABILITIES

LISTENING	SPEAKING	READING	WRITING
1. Can understand radio, telephone, and face-to-face conversations.	1. Can function on the telephone or in face-to-face conversation with no major structural or pronunciation errors.	1. Can read anything in the newspapers, and should be able to read materials related to his/her work. Is generally at a reading level comparable his/her age.	1. Can write many prose types-description, exposition, argument-without significant structural or stylistic errors.
2. Can understand most natural conversation. Has difficulty with idiomatic speech.	2. Can function in normal conversation; has some structural and pronunciation errors, though meaning can be easily discerned.	2. Can read anything in the newspapers and should be able to read materials related to his work. Will require time and a dictionary.	2. Can write letters, memos. Can carry on day to day writing requirements of adult life (lists, cheques, applications, etc.) - without significant structural errors.
3. Can generally understand natural conversation; will often require repetition and rewording.	3. Can function in normal conversation with hesitation-may have to repeat and reword what he/she says; has many structural and/or pronunciation errors.	3. Can read some things in the newspapers with difficulty. Will require time and a dictionary. Occasionally misinterprets and misunderstands.	3. Can write textbook exercises. Is incomprehensible in a free writing situation.
4. Can understand only basic conversations with low content and few idioms.	4. Can communicate needs, but is limited to simple phrases. Is often incomprehensible in normal conversation; has many structural and pronunciation errors.	4. Can read only those exercises which have been drilled orally in class.	4. Can copy.
5. Cannot understand any English.	5. Cannot speak any English.	5. Cannot read English.	5. Cannot write English script.

SCALE FOR THE RATING OF PLACEMENT NEEDS

(A) His need can be met within the regular classroom
(B) This student requires placement in a special English class for new Canadians
(C) This student requires special help in addition to placement in an English class for new Canadians

APPENDIX A (3)

SURVEY -- PUPILS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE

Name	First Language	TEACHER'S RATING OF STUDENT'S ABILITIES (1, 2, 3, 4, or 5)				Placement Needs (A, B, or C)
		Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing	

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December 6, 1974 APPENDIX B

TO: Principals of Elementary Schools

RE: SURVEY OF NEEDS OF PUPILS FOR WHOM ENGLISH IS A SECOND LANGUAGE

First I want to thank you and the members of your staff for the prompt attention you gave to the survey on Pupils for Whom English is a Second Language. I apologize that we are making many demands on your time and specifically that I have to seek further help in regard to this survey.

At the meeting of the Task Force on English this week, the representative of the Vancouver Elementary School Teachers Association asked that we seek more specific information about the placement needs of pupils for whom English is a second language. You may recall that on the sheets that were completed by the teachers, we asked for opinions about the amount of help needed by each pupil. Teachers were asked to respond in terms of three categories: A, B, and C. We are now asking that in the right hand margin beyond column 7 that teachers indicate the amount of help needed in terms of four categories (1, 2, 3 or 4) as listed below:

1. (Same as the former A category) His need can be met within the regular classroom.
2. His needs can be met in a regular classroom with modified class size and a modified program.
3. (Same as the former B category) This student requires placement in a special English class for new Canadians.
4. (Same as the former C category) This student requires special help in addition to placement in an English class for new Canadians.

Presumably, some of the students that were categorized A or B might be reclassified in category 2. The classification of the remainder would be unchanged. Furthermore, it is likely that all of the students that were categorized C originally would be categorized 4 on the new scale.

On the school summary of returns, please record the number in each category: 1, 2, 3 or 4. The total should agree with that of the earlier return. It would be particularly helpful to have your return by Tuesday morning, December 10th if you can manage it. In any case, thank you for your prompt attention to this request.

E. N. Ellis

E.N. Ellis,
Head, Evaluation and Research

ENE/dc